


The Balancing Act: Evaluating Information Outside of the Classroom



ACRL | NEC Annual Conference



Indigenous Land and Territorial Acknowledgement

With deep respect, and related to our mission of making an impact across our community by fostering research, teaching, and discovery, the Brandeis Library formally acknowledges that the land we work, learn, and gather on is the traditional territory of indigenous peoples, including the Nipmuc, Massa-adchu-es-et (Massachusetts), Pennacook (Pawtucket or Merrimack), and Wôpanâak (Wampanoag) peoples, and their present day Nations and descendants. We acknowledge the painful history of invasion and violent dispossession of these lands and the resulting genocide, disease, enslavement, and displacement of multiple indigenous communities it brought.

This land acknowledgment is but one aspect of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion path that we are pursuing in an ongoing effort to reimagine our Library as an antiracist, anticolonial, diverse, and inclusive nexus for knowledge, community, and justice.

Presentation Outcomes

Attendees will be able to:

- design lessons which empower students with critical information literacy skills for their lives outside of the classroom
- implement active learning exercises that engage students with a range of topics, including critical evaluation of the news, how to search for underrepresented perspectives, personal data collection by private companies, search algorithms and identifying implicit bias in search results.

More about the Stanford History Education Group's research: Breakstone, Smith, Wineburg, Rapaport., Carle., Garland, & Saavedra, 2019)

Brandeis Core Curriculum

Undergraduates entering Brandeis in fall 2019
which includes requirements in:

- First Year Experience
- Foundation Literacies
- Schools of Thought
- Global Engagement
- **Health, Wellness, and Life Skills**

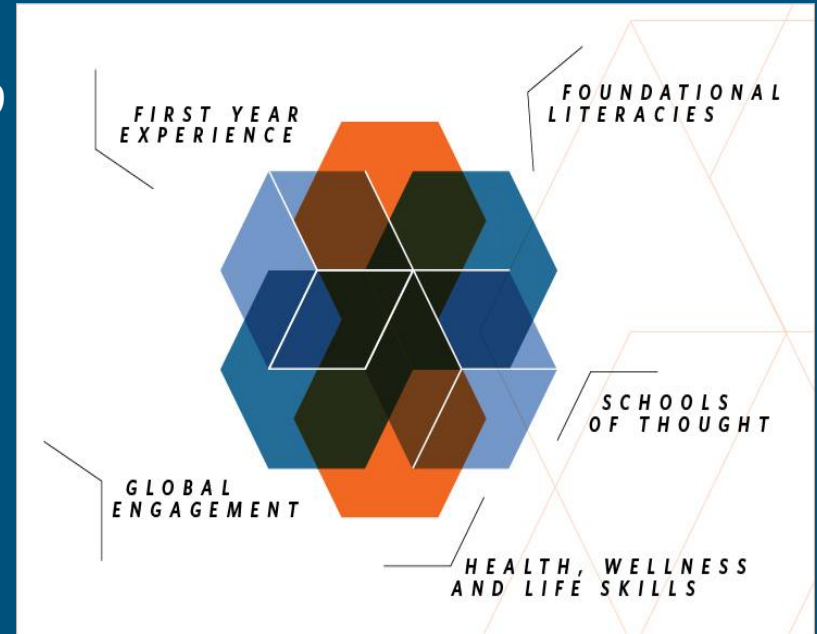


Image credit: brandeis.edu/arts-sciences/core/requirements/health-wellness-life.html

Why not just focus on helping students develop information literacy skills for academic research?

Students often report that the evaluation skills taught for academic research do not always translate when it comes to information-seeking outside of the classroom.¹

Students' positive attitudes about the news are among “the best predictors of the intent to participate in civic engagement.”²

¹ Head, Whibey, Metaxas, MacMillan, and Cohen, 2018; Head, Fister, and MacMillan, 2020; Breakstone, Smith, Wineburg, Rapaport, Carle, Garland, & Saavedra, 2019; Wineburg, McGrew, Breakstone, & Ortega, 2016.

² Hobbs, Donnelly, Friesem, & Moen, 2013.

Critical Evaluation of the News Curriculum

- fact-checking strategies
- filter bubbles and confirmation bias
- tools for verifying the news & online information
- underrepresented voices in news coverage
- the business of news

Just Google It! Curriculum

- personal data collection by private companies
- search algorithms
- identifying implicit bias
- surveillance capitalism
- digital redlining
- recommended privacy and security practices

Course Outcomes



Students reported being better equipped to navigate information online and in the news by applying the information-seeking skills and knowledge they had gained to their personal lives.



Student Feedback

Just Google It!

- “This module taught me the skills to evaluate my interactions with websites and take action to better protect my privacy and data when I use the internet.”
- “I have learnt a lot about data, data mining and how best to use my social media platforms whilst remaining cognisant of the stakes involved in ‘existing online’...and have developed an ability to be strongly critical of the technologies I use on a daily basis.”

Critical Evaluation of the News

- “I feel much more confident in my ability to assess news items I encounter in my life”
- “I think I will be a more conscientious news consumer. I've always wanted this, but this course gave me the tools”
- “It makes me more interested in keeping up with the news, as well as looking for potentially overlooked aspects of stories in news coverage”

Assignment 1

Lesson/Workshop: Visit the website of the American news outlet, such as the *New York Times*, that you most frequently use. Look for a news story covering an event in an African country. Next, visit [Africanews](#) and find news coverage of the same event. Compare and contrast the coverage from the two different news sources.

Outcomes: Students will describe ways in which the most prominent news sources often overlook the perspectives of marginalized individuals. Students will identify and explore news sources which include the voices of individuals who are underrepresented in other news coverage.

Assignment 2

Lesson/Workshop: Use the [Expanding News Desert Map](#) to explore the state of news in two different areas of the United States. (You can look at the county or state level.)

- How has the number of newspapers changed during the last 15 years?
- How much has newspaper circulation changed in the last 15 years?
- Who owns the newspapers in these geographic regions?

Outcomes: Students will be able to describe the economic forces influencing news outlets.

Assignment 3

Lesson/Workshop: Review concepts from [Safiya Umoja Noble's Algorithms of Oppression](#) that search algorithms privilege whiteness and discriminate against BIPOC. Share examples of search results where algorithms produce biased results. Students replicate Noble's work by conducting Google searches (that do not engage in racial, ethnic, or religious identity) and discuss any bias they find.

Outcomes: Students will be able to evaluate the bias of search algorithms and use that frame to interpret future Google searches.

Assignment 4

Lesson/Workshop: Visit the [Google Account Data & Personalization dashboard](#) and [Google Takeout](#) to look into the online activity Google has recorded and stored. Review (with the option to download) the data that is already stored, delete any items desired, and review settings to prevent future data from being recorded. Discussion about surveillance capitalism to follow.

Outcomes: Students will be able to

- Analyze their own data and digital footprint
- Manage and take ownership of their own Google data
- Assess personal data collection and surveillance capitalism

Exploring *My Google Activity*



My Google Activity

The activity you keep helps Google make services more useful for you, like helping you rediscover the things you've searched for, read, and watched.

You can see and delete your activity using the controls on this page.

Web & App Activity



Off



Location History



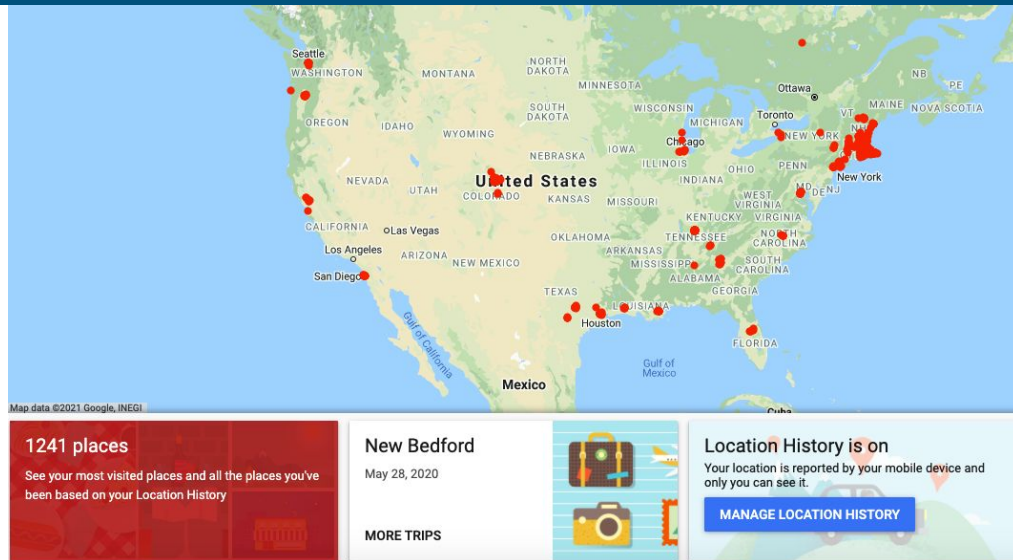
On



YouTube History



Off



Assignment 5

Lesson/Workshop: Evaluate the following two webpages:

- [American Academy of Pediatrics](#)
- [American College of Pediatricians](#)

Which do you find more reliable and why?

Outcomes: Students will apply a variety of strategies for verifying news and other online information.

Comparing the two sites

American Academy of Pediatrics

The screenshot shows the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) website. The header includes the AAP logo and navigation links: My Collaboration Sites, Early Career, Pediatric Trainees, International, and HealthyChildren.org. Below the header is a search bar and a "SearchAAP" button. The main content area features the "THERESILIENCEPROJECT" logo with the tagline "We can stop Toxic Stress." and a section titled "Bullying and Cyberbullying". A sidebar on the left lists various topics: The Resilience Project, Children Exposed to Violence and Toxic Stress, Addressing the Different Types of Violence, Policy and Education, Improving Practice, Resources, and Related Initiatives. A small video player is visible at the bottom right of the main content area.

American College of Pediatricians

The screenshot shows the American College of Pediatricians (ACP) website. The header includes the ACP logo and navigation links: About Us, Resources, News, Contact Us, Donate, and Become a Member. The main content area features the title "Bullying at School: Never Acceptable" and a sub-header "American College of Pediatricians - October 2013". The text discusses the importance of respectful self-expression for all students and the role of parental involvement in resolving bullying. It also includes a definition of bullying and a section titled "Forms of Bullying".

Read more at Owen (2017).

Learn from Professional Fact Checkers

Leaving an unfamiliar site to verify information with additional sources

"American College of Pediatricians" -site:https://acpeds.org/

Search results for "American College of Pediatricians" -site:https://acpeds.org/

About 73,200 results (0.37 seconds)

www.splcenter.org › extremist-files › group › american... ▼

American College of Pediatricians | Southern Poverty Law ...

The **American College of Pediatricians** (ACPeds) is a fringe anti-LGBTQ hate group that masquerades as the premier U.S. association of pediatricians to push ...

en.wikipedia.org › wiki › American_College_of_Pediat... ▼

American College of Pediatricians - Wikipedia

The **American College of Pediatricians** (ACPeds) is a socially conservative advocacy group of pediatricians and other healthcare professionals in the United ...

Members: 500 (estimated) **Location:** Gainesville, Florida
Founders: Gerry Boccarossa and Joseph Zanga **Expenses (2015):** \$78,761

[Positions](#) · [Publications](#) · [Reception](#)

www.psychologytoday.com › blog › political-minds › t... ▼

The American College of Pediatricians Is an Anti-LGBT Group ...

May 8, 2017 — A small but clever group created a legit-sounding name and spread false reports that have the potential to harm LGBT youth.

Build your own lesson!

Even if you do not have the opportunity teach a multi-week course, many of the ideas discussed here could be applied to one-shot sessions focused on developing lessons for “everyday” information literacy skills.

[Build Your Own Information Evaluation Lesson:](#)

bit.ly/NELIG2021

Build Your Own Information Evaluation Lesson

What learning outcome will you address?

Choose from the list below or come up with your own:

- Define algorithms and technological redlining
- Locate their own Google data profile
- Analyze their own data and digital footprint
- Manage and delete their own data
- Integrate best IT security practices
- Evaluate keyword and subject headings
- Assess search results for bias
- Justify or reject surveillance capitalism
- Describe strategies for overcoming confirmation bias and filter bubbles in their own news consumption
- Apply a variety of strategies for verifying news and other online information
- Identify and explore news sources which include the voices of individuals who are underrepresented in other news coverage
- Describe the economic forces influencing news outlets
- Other: _____

Setting the stage

What information will present? (such as a short video, an article, or a slides you've prepared)

Student Activity

What will students do as part of the lesson plan?

How will students demonstrate that they've achieved the learning outcome you've selected?

Syllabus Links

Critical Evaluation of the News [Syllabus](#)

Just Google It [Syllabus](#)

Contact us with any questions!

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